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SUBJECT:REPORT OF SAUDI AID OFFER FOR SOMALIA

1. MAY 5 WASHINGTON POST CARRIED ARTICLE BY LAURENCE STERN ENTITLED "SAUDI OFFER OF AID REPORTED." PORTIONS OF ARTICLE RELEVANT TO SOMALIA FOLLOW:

FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA JAMES AKINS TOLD A SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE YESTERDAY THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT TURNED A DEAF EAR LAST YEAR TO A SAUDI GOVERNMENT OFFER TO FINANCE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID PROGRAMS TO SOMALIA AS A MEANS OF ELIMINATING THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE THERE.

AKINS SAID HE WAS INFORMED BY A STATE DEPARTMENT COLLEAGUE THAT THE REASON HE RECEIVED NO ANSWER FROM WASHINGTON TO THE SAUDI OFFER WAS THAT THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT WAS PRESS-ING ITS CASE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A MAJOR U.S. NAVAL BASE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ON DIEGO GARCIA ISLAND.

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A POWERFUL PENTAGON ARGUMENT TO CONGRESS ON THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE LAST YEAR WAS THE GROWING THREAT OF THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA.

"THIS IS THE MOST DISHONEST THING I HAVE HEARD IN 30 YEARS IN CONGRESS," EXCLAIMED SEN. STUART SYMINGTON (D-MO.), WHO OPPOSED THE INDIAN OCEAN BASE IN THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE.

"...THE ARGUMENT WAS USED WITH GREAT PERSUASION IN CONGRESS THAT SINCE THE RUSSIANS WERE IN SOMALIA IT WAS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A BASE IN DIEGO GARCIA," HE SAID.

CONGRESS APPROVED DOLS. 13.8 MILLION FOR A PERMANENT NAVAL BASE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND AFTER A STORMY BATTLE OVER COSTS AND INCREASING MILITARY RIVALRIES IN THE REGION.

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FRANK CHURCH (D-IDAHO), AFTER HEARING AKINS, SAID, "THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE CERTAINLY SUGGESTS A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DESIRE OF THE NAVY FOR THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE WITH A CONTINUATION OF THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE IN SOMALIA TO JUSTIFY THE BASE."

AKINS SAID THE SAUDI OFFER WAS RELAYED TO WASHINGTON THROUGH HIM BECAUSE OF THE GROWING CONCERN OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT OVER THE RUSSIAN NAVAL BUILDUP IN SOMALIA.

THIS CONCERN, THE FORMER AMBASSADOR SAID, WAS STIMULATED BY U.S. OFFICIALS WHO MADE AVAILABLE TO THE SAUDIS PHOTOGRAPHS OF SOVIET NAVAL FACILITIES IN SOMALIA. THE SAUDIS, SAID AKINS, "BECAME VERY FRIGHTENED."

THE TERMS OF THE SAUDI PROPOSAL WHICH HE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON, AKINS SAID, WAS THAT THE SAUDIS WOULD PROVIDE SOME DOLS. 15 MILLION IN ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND FOR THE SUPPLY OF U.S. MILITARY AID TO SOMALIA.

AKINS SAID HE HAD NO IDEA WHETHER THE PROPOSAL WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE SOMALIS BECAUSE IT WAS STOPPED DEAD IN WASHINGTON.

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(AFTER AKINS' TESTIMONY, SYMINGTON CONFRONTED DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSFELD AND NAVY SECRETARY WILLIAM MIDDENDORF ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS, REUTER REPORTED.

(BOTH DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF THE REPORTED SAUDI OFFER. A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE TESTIMONY.)

2. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT. KISSINGER

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